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Behind the seams on screen

Hollywood shops in Duxbury
when it needs movie material

By Rich Fahey
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DUXBURY — Suzanne Boucher's job involves cutting fabrics, but she also knows what it's like to end up on the cutting-room floor.

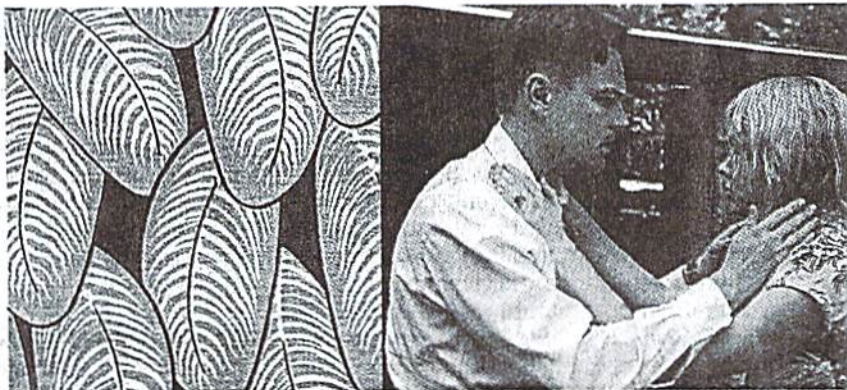
Experience has told Boucher that even when a movie company buys her fabrics, it doesn't always mean the materials will be used in a movie. Or that when they are used, that they'll even be visible.

Boucher, 47, is the co-owner with her husband, Fred, of Full Swing Textiles, a Duxbury company that specializes in vintage 1940s- and 1950s-style fabrics printed on bark-cloth, a popular material at the time. The fabrics are often used by art directors of movies with scenes set in those decades.

Boucher said that in the past 20 years, 25 movies have used her company's fabrics, which are also found in nightclubs, casinos, restaurants, and hotels around the world.

"Somehow all the movie art directors have our samples, and they call us every couple of months," said Boucher, a former photo stylist for decorating magazines and a designer at the Boston Design Center. "They work very quick-

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SHUTTER ISLAND A pattern of palm fronds on a cherry background was used.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD Art directors bought more than 50 yards of a fabric called Savanna



QUIZ SHOW Needed a 1950s motif, Mid-Century Modern on coral.

AT THE MOVIES Barkcloth fabrics made by Full Swing Textiles have been used in the following films:

1991 The Marrying Man
 1992 Mambo Kings
 1992 A River Runs Through It
 1992 Malcolm X
 1993 Wrestling Ernest Hemingway
 1993 What's Love Got To Do With It?
 1994 Quiz Show
 1994 Ed Wood
 1994 Getting Even With Dad
 1994 Trial By Jury
 1995 Indian In The Cupboard
 1996 The Bird Cage



TOM HERDE PHOTO

Suzanne Boucher
 of Full Swing
 Textiles.

1996 Jack
 1997 L.A. Confidential
 1997 Leave it to Beaver
 1998 The Imposters
 2000 Joe Gould's Secret
 2000 Me, Myself and Irene
 2003 Mona Lisa Smile
 2006 The Good Shepherd
 2006 Hollywoodland
 2007 King of California
 2007 For One More Day
 2010 Shutter Island
 2010 Peacock

SOURCE: Suzanne Boucher, owner
 of Full Swing Textiles



MONA LISA SMILE Adapted another botanical pattern, Palm Beach on cappuccino.



HOLLYWOODLAND Set decorators used a Western theme called Yippee-Ei-O on red.

She's got the stuff for the silver screen

► MOVIE FABRIC

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ly. They know what they want."

Her work is front and center in a key scene in the hit movie "Shutter Island," which was filmed in Massachusetts.

The Oscar-winning husband-and-wife art directors Dante Ferretti and Francesca Lo Schiavo, who have worked with "Shutter Island" director Martin Scorsese on films such as "Gangs of New York" and "The Aviator," selected four of Boucher's barkcloth fabrics for "Shutter Island." Their assistants called Boucher for samples while they were filming in Middleborough last year, and they asked for solid barkcloth in teal, Shephard Hotel (a stripe) in seaglass and cinnabar, and palm in cherry.

All four fabrics are visible in the movie's flashback scene in which actor Leonardo DiCaprio is embracing actress Michelle Williams, playing his deceased wife, from behind as she crumbles into ashes; the stripe is behind them on the sofa and the chair.

Boucher said she didn't see the palm and solid barkcloth when she watched the movie's trailer, but picked them up in the drapes in the same scene when she saw the entire movie later.

"They ordered more than 20 yards of each, and I remember them talking about drapes," she said.

After production designers and art directors have had their way with the Bouchers' material, the couple often has a hard time recognizing it on screen. They said they sent more than 50 yards of a sepia-colored fabric called Savanna to the art directors of the 2006 Matt Damon film "The Good Shepherd," about the creation of the CIA after World War II. But what they saw on film was almost something else.

"It went to a laundromat in Brooklyn to be stone-washed to make it faded and dull before being made into drapes, and we never did recognize it, even with our noses stuck to the screen," said Suzanne Boucher.

It was the same with "The



TOM HERDE FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Suzanne Boucher, co-owner of Full Swing Textiles, with fabrics she provided that were used in the movie "Shutter Island."

Marrying Man," the 1991 movie that starred Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger.

"They ordered a ton of fabrics, and they covered all these bar stools, but it was in a dark-lit lounge and you couldn't even see them," said Boucher.

Barkcloth was originally made in Hawaii from the soft inner bark of tapa trees. Strips of bark were first soaked and then beaten with a mallet to form large strips of fabric, then block-printed with tropical designs.

During World War II, many movies featured tropical themes, and American textile plants responded to that by making the fabric out of cotton. A heavy, durable fabric, it was popular for upholstered furniture, slipcovers, curtains, bed skirts, and pillows.

Boucher's work is in demand by production designers and art directors not only because of her design skills with barkcloth, but also because she has her own formula, developed with her weaver, for recreating the material just as it was made during the 1940s. She has found other uses for vin-

tage barkcloth, such as using patterns that have appeared in movies to create a movie theme in the display window of Peabody Office Furniture on Congress Street in downtown Boston.

Richard Vaughn, the company's chief executive, said Boucher's patterns "have transformed our display windows into a tranquil tropical space for everyone to experience who walks by our building."

Interior decorator Michelle A. DiPersio of Duxbury, editor of *Dovetails Antiques & Home* magazine and owner of an antiques business of the same name, said Boucher's feel for colors is the key to her success.

"Basically, Suzanne can take that look of 1930s glam or Vegas and tweak the colors to make them more modern and new, but without losing the Hollywood glam aspect of the fabric," said DiPersio.

Boucher said her fabrics are priced at \$15 a yard to \$48 a yard.

Cotton barkcloth was enjoying a revival of sorts when Bou-

cher went to work in 1988 in a Newport, R.I., shop that featured vintage furniture and accessories. Shop owner Michele Mancini, who also collected vintage textiles, scored a coup when she purchased 16,000 yards of barkcloth that was found in a closed West Virginia factory. She and Boucher mailed samples to design centers around the country, and orders poured in — including from the Walt Disney Co., which wanted barkcloth for its flashback scenes set in 1955 for the second installment of the "Back to the Future" trilogy.

By 1990, the material was almost gone, so Mancini and Boucher decided to make their own with vintage designs. They had to find a weaver, who retrofitted a special loom for the heavy, double-twisted yarn.

Boucher left the company a few years later, but stayed in touch with Mancini. She then bought the company from Mancini in 2005, moved it to Duxbury, and took it in a new direction by selling the material directly to consumers instead of middlemen. She also established an online boutique.

Interest in barkcloth fluctuates with fashion trends, but Boucher has added new designs to try to appeal to a broader clientele.

"They have a clean, modern look that should appeal to a younger crowd," she said.

Meanwhile, she said, the fun part of being a small portion of the movie world is that the work is preserved forever.

"We'll be watching a movie, and all of a sudden our fabrics will pop up on the screen," she said. "We'll have forgotten all about that movie."

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